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UNCLAS ROME 004431

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FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: A HUMANITARIAN LOOK AT COTE D'IVOIRE PAINTS A  
PRECARIOUS PICTURE

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SUMMARY  
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1. The food security and nutritional situation in the northern and western areas of Cote d'Ivoire has been adversely affected by the events of the past year. The lack of civil administration, breakdown in health services, and fighting in the west has had a serious negative impact on the affected areas. Even if the peace process and demobilization succeed, it will take several months for the population to bounce back. Nicla refugee camp in Guiglo now houses 4,140 Liberian refugees and a recent registration exercise in Tabou department yielded a total of 45,400 refugees. The U.N. estimates the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to be 500,000-600,000. There are currently 420 severely malnourished children in therapeutic feeding centers in the west and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attribute the nutritional problems primarily to the lack of health services, with access to food and clean water as the secondary cause. The U.N. World Food Program (WFP) is providing food to vulnerable populations through a variety of activities suited for specific needs. Lack of NGO implementing partners is a major stumbling block, however. The upcoming Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N. (FAO) and WFP Food and Crop Assessment will help shed light on the current national food security situation. WFP and FAO have mounted a successful seeds and tools project targeting internally displaced persons and their host communities. See para 37 for recommendations. End Summary.

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BACKGROUND  
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2. Special Assistant to Ambassador Tony Hall, Max Finberg, and Senior Emergency Coordinator (SEC) R. Davis in the U.S. Mission/Rome visited Cote d'Ivoire September 3-9. The team traveled to the western areas of Guiglo and Tabou September 4-6, and the SEC followed on with meetings in Abidjan through September 9, as Finberg departed Cote d'Ivoire after the field travel. Shane Hough, from State/PRM, also joined on the travel. The purpose of the trip was to gain a better understanding of the food security situation in the country and its nutritional impact on the population. This report discusses these topics, and a second report focuses on the plight of third country nationals in the west.

3. Up country, the team met with refugees in Nicla refugee camp located in Guiglo and refugees and residents in Prolo and Tabou near the Liberian border, third country nationals (TCNs) housed in Guiglo transit center, and local residents and IDPs in a small town (Dahoua) northeast of Guiglo where WFP and FAO are implementing a joint agricultural project. RBONCEY, DATTEBERRY  
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Meetings were held with the NGO community in the field and in Abidjan, UNHCR, UNICEF, FAO, French Cooperation, World Bank, the Interagency Humanitarian Coordination Committee (IAHCC) Coordinator, French Licorne Force in Guiglo, and the local administrations in Guiglo and Tabou.

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OVERVIEW  
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14. The humanitarian situation in western and northern Cote d'Ivoire is unsettling. On the surface the peace process is proceeding, but progress is slow in touching people's lives in the western and northern sections of the country. The U.N. estimates that 500,000-600,000 persons remain displaced and there are over 50,000 refugees. In the north (held by the New Forces for just over one year), neither the civil administration nor the banks is functioning; therefore, the health system is not operating. The lack of health services alongside a continued decrease in purchasing power has had damaging effects on the nutritional situation of the general public, and has been especially difficult for the children and elderly.

15. In the west, even though the circumstances are different, the results are the same but more extreme. In government-held areas of the west, almost all of the civil administrators fled due to the fighting that took place between October 2002 and May 2003. Slowly they are returning, but there remain many villages where little to no civil administration exists. And there are still areas in the west that are considered very dangerous. Large numbers of the work force from the coffee, cocoa, and palm oil plantations, primarily composed of third country nationals (TCNs), have been chased out. About 7,000 TCNs, seventy percent of whom were Burkinabe, were repatriated to Burkina Faso with the help of the International Organization for Migration, but thousands also remain displaced inside Cote d'Ivoire and prefer to stay, hoping to return to their land in Cote d'Ivoire some day. Issues surrounding their protection are also a concern. (See sep tel.)

16. The lack of health services combined with the fact that many people lived in the bush for weeks and weeks has severely weakened the population in the west. Even though WFP began providing general distributions to the towns it could access in March, when greater access was gained in late May and June, with the help of the deployment of the French Licorne forces, the humanitarian community discovered a population in great need of nutritional and medical assistance. Therapeutic feeding centers were quickly established in two locations in the west (Guiglo and Man) that treated 520 severely malnourished children. Three months later the number in the two centers has now decreased by only 100 to a total of 420. The NGOs working ON IN ROME

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in nutrition attribute the nutritional problems primarily to the lack of health services, with access to food and clean water as the secondary cause.

17. Added to this equation is a notable lack of international NGOs, insufficient funding, and significant numbers of turnover in staff. Most of the international NGOs that are working in the west, which is a handful, arrived between April and June. There are also a few local NGOs, but they lack adequate capacity. The majority of the funding comes from private funds, the European Commission, and USAID/DCHA/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). (Note: In fiscal year 2003, USAID/OFDA provided 2.4 million USD to four NGOs working in health, nutrition, and water/sanitation, and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and UNICEF. End Note.) French Cooperation said it is providing very little to humanitarian assistance; the French contribution is the French Licorne forces.

18. School teachers are being paid by the central government, whether working or not, but because banks are closed in the north, a teacher in the north is required to go to the south to cash the check. Many are scared to go; others fled to the south months ago, and now may be scared to return to the north once the schools officially re-open. In the meantime, some schools are functioning in the north, with about two-thirds of the teaching force composed of university students unable to attend classes since the

university in Yamoussoukro is also closed. To assist the teachers, WFP has been providing a one-month ration for one person to the teachers in the north. Schools in the south and east are to open October 6. The ones in the north began in January and will continue through October. They will take a two-month break and restart in January.

9. It is the team's conclusion that the humanitarian situation in Cote d'Ivoire is at a crossroads. If the peace process progresses positively and demobilization begins, the humanitarian situation will improve. However, if the peace process stalls or demobilization does not occur within the coming months, then the food security situation and health of the general population in the affected areas will continue to decline and could become quite critical. Under the best case scenario, it should be noted that needs already identified will continue to require assistance for the next six to ten months, at a minimum, to help people get back on their feet. The humanitarian situation in Cote d'Ivoire merits close monitoring.

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NICLA REFUGEE CAMP  
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10. There are currently 4,140 refugees in Nicla refugeeF 11 ROME 004431

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camp, a camp that has been in existence for over ten years. More than 2,000 new refugees arrived in Nicla between June and August. The camp inhabitants are Liberians that have resided in Nicla anywhere between a few weeks to over ten years. WFP provides a general food distribution in the camp and has changed from giving a monthly ration to providing a ration every two weeks because the camp has been experiencing a significant combination of new arrivals and departures, as many of these refugees are interviewing for the U.S. resettlement program. At the same time, Liberians continue to arrive, albeit at a much slower pace in the last four weeks since Charles Taylor left Liberia. 478 arrivals came between August 4-19 and 266 between August 20 and September 1. The recent entries were said to have come with very little.

11. The refugees said they were allowed to go to town and that they used to have land in the vicinity of the camp on which to cultivate. Since troubles began in Cote d'Ivoire last September however, the refugees said the local authorities stopped allowing the refugees to farm.

12. The team witnessed a food distribution taking place under the management of Caritas, WFP's implementing partner, one of only two NGOs (both local) working in the camp. The daily ration provided for two weeks was composed of 250 grams (gm) rice, 200 gm maize meal, 30 gm vegetable oil, and 5 gm salt. Beans and corn-soy blend (CSB) were missing from the ration because of WFP's pipeline break. The distribution seemed to be well organized and was overseen by members of the Cote d'Ivoire armed forces (FANCI). Absent, however, was food basket monitoring which should be done when beneficiaries exit the distribution site, and post-distribution monitoring (PDM), which should occur two weeks after the distribution. Just recently, WFP's food monitors began PDM, but WFP/CI does not have adequate staff to do a thorough job of PDM. An NGO should have the task.

13. In addition, the prefet of Guiglo stated that there were 12,000 IDPs in his department--not living in camps.

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TABOU AREA  
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14. Fighting in the extreme southwest began in January 2003 but remained about 80 km north of Tabou town, which is

located on the ocean and about 30 km from the Liberian border. Tabou department is composed of 132 villages with a population of approximately 137,000 (excluding refugees). The area around Tabou traditionally had few services. For example, there is only one hour of water every two days in Tabou town. The French Licorne forces had maintained a base in Tabou since January, but closed it and moved to San Pedro, 100 kms. east along the coast, in late August, asR POL; USAID FOR AADAMS, RBONCEY, DATTEBERRY  
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they said the security situation had greatly improved. The area between Tai and Grabo, 60 kms. north of Tabou, became accessible only in the last month.

15. WFP opened a sub-office in Tabou in May as the influx of refugees from Liberia began to grow. UNHCR conducted a registration exercise August 30-September 1 which resulted in a count of 45,402 refugees, and all agree that the figure is pretty reliable. The vast majority of the refugees live with hosting families, with only about 4,000 living in the transit center in Tabou town. The refugees in the transit center receive three hot meals a day rather than dry rations. WFP wants to maintain this practice to reinforce the temporary nature of the camp.

16. In early July, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) arrived in the area and began assisting with mobile medical clinics and water/sanitation in surrounding villages. Oxfam just began working in the area, also doing health and water/sanitation in villages hosting refugees. There is currently no NGO in this area focused on nutrition.

17. Caritas serves as WFP's implementing partner for food distributions in Tabou department. Caritas has conducted two general distributions (one in June and second in late July) to the refugees in the Tabou area, but WFP is likely to change to only targeted distributions to the most vulnerable in the future via supplementary feeding and school feeding for the host populations, IDPs, and refugees alike, which the team supports. WFP has also recently formed a registration and distribution team that is composed of six individuals and has also recruited two food aid monitors locally.

18. Oxfam conducted a food security assessment of the Tabou area in June, but could not access the area between Grabo and Tai, 120 kms. to the north, at the time. The mission found no emergency situation, but noted constraints in the household due to lack of cash and access to land to grow food. Oxfam is fielding another food security mission to Tabou in October.

19. Populations in Tabou department have doubled, and in some cases, tripled in size. Even though the locals and the refugees are getting along well thus far, there is concern about overstretching the communities to share very limited supplies of food and water and health and sanitation services. Thus the work of the NGOs in these areas is important to addressing potential tensions.

20. Very near Tabou is the PALMCI company producing palm oil. PALMCI had employed many TCNs, but now finds itself lacking much of its workforce. UNHCR had met with PALMCI just before the team's visit and reported that PALMCI was very willing to temporarily hire the refugees as it had 900N FOR REFUGEE COORDINATOR  
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jobs to fill.

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WET FEEDING FOR CHILDREN  
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21. In addition to providing wet meals to the children in the Nicla transit camp (reported in sep tel), Solidarites is also providing wet meals five days a week to children five years and younger and mothers in Toulepleu (4,500), Duekoue (355), and Daloa (1,060). The meals are provided

in the early morning and at noon. In between the meals, the children stay at the feeding point and play games. In Toulepleu, Solidarites is feeding all children in the village, including IDP, refugee, and host family children. With four feeding centers in Toulepleu, Solidarites began with feeding 3,500 children, but quickly realized there were many more in need. It is now at 4,500 and stated it would probably increase to 5,000 if WFP had sufficient food stocks to support the program. Solidarites's funding stops at the end of September, but it hopes that it can continue its wet feeding to the children at least through October, as IDPs are returning to the villages around Toulepleu. (Comment: Solidarites is providing a valuable service within this western area of Cote d'Ivoire. If they stop their current projects, the negative impact on the children could be quite acute. End Comment.)

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MALNUTRITION  
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122. In June, as humanitarian organizations began to have access to areas in the west, it was apparent that special nutritional interventions were critical. Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) France opened a therapeutic feeding center (TFC) in Guiglo and MSF/Belgium opened a TFC in Man targeting severely malnourished children five years and younger (less than 70 percent weight for height). Initially, there were about 200 children in the Guiglo TFC and 320 in Man. The caseload in Guiglo's TFC has now lowered to 130 patients, but the center in Man has maintained an average of 300 patients, ranging from 260 to 320 patients at any one time. On September 8, there were 289 children in the Man TFC. MSF/France reports that it continues to receive patients that have been hiding in the bush and that the majority of malnourishment is in the form of kwashiorkor, reflecting a lack of protein in the diet.

123. MSF/Holland is working in the Danane area with ten internationals living in Danane. It operates mobile clinics, works in the Danane hospital, and sees 200-300 patients a day. It refers cases of severe malnutrition to MSF/B's TFC in Man. MSF/B is considering also opening a TFC in Korhogo. SAID FOR AADAMS, RBONCEY, DATTEBERRY  
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124. Action Contre La Faim (ACF), which began working in Bouake last October, operates ten supplementary feeding centers (for moderately malnourished children): five in government-controlled areas and five in rebel-held territories. Their centers in Duekoue, Man, and Guiglo complement the TFCs run by MSF.

125. Remembering Burundi in 1997, when many, many adults hid in the forest for months and emerged in an extremely fragile condition, the SEC asked MSF if it had seen severely malnourished adults. The answer was affirmative. Adults are often not treated for malnourishment as the focus is usually on children, unless the numbers become overwhelming as they did in Burundi. The fact that there are severely malnourished adults in a country such as Cote d'Ivoire is a worrying sign.

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LACK OF HEALTH SERVICES  
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126. The area north of Guiglo to Man, west to Danane and south to Toulepleu forms a square of territory that is quite delicate. The MSFs and Merlin are operating mobile clinics to treat health problems and identify malnutrition, but they report it is not enough. Besides ICRC, the MSFs, Solidarites, and Merlin are the only NGOs working in this area, as the security situation remains tenuous. Guiglo is a government-held area but going north to Man or west to Danane crosses into New Forces-held terrain. MSF reported that some IDPs are returning to the area, but they have lost most of their assets and their purchasing power is very low.

127. As reported in para 6 above, the MSFs report that the primary culprit behind the malnutrition levels is morbidity, related to the current lack of health services in the west and north. Services in the west were suspended because of insecurity and all civil administration in the north came to a standstill after September 19 last year. Services in the north have never resumed, and the west remains too insecure for most health workers.



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FOOD SECURITY  
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128. Cote d'Ivoire is a large country with a variety of cash crops. It is the leading cocoa producer in the world, holding 43 percent of the world market. It is also a major coffee producer and in the south, large plantations of oil palms, rubber trees, banana and pineapple exist. In the eastern zone between rain forest and savanna, cashew plantations are gradually replacing the declining cocoa plantations. The north produces about two-thirds of the sugar needs of the country, and cotton is the north's most AIDAC

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important cash crop (500 000 tons were expected for 2003).  
(Source: FAO Emergency Needs Assessment, February 2003.)

129. With this as a backdrop, it is difficult to grasp the fact that there could be food security problems and severe malnourishment in Cote d'Ivoire. As stated above, the displacement caused by the fighting from October to May coupled with the breakdown in social services has led to a decline in basic food production, in purchasing power, and in the general health of the population in the affected zones. Some food security assessments have been performed by NGOs, but analysis is lacking and there is no U.N. agency serving as an overall coordinator for fielding the assessments or the methodology employed.

130. In May, WFP established a food security working group headed by a staff member dedicated to tracking the food security situation. WFP has sent a proposal to various donors for the establishment of a Risk and Food Security Monitoring System (355,000 USD for one year), but thus far has received no funds. The unit would collect and provide information on the economic, social, health, and political factors affecting food security in coordination with the government, U.N. agencies, and NGOs. In addition, the unit would coordinate data collection and analysis which would serve as a guide for interventions. Such work is vital for the continued monitoring and understanding of the food security situation in Cote d'Ivoire. Also, an FAO and WFP Crop and Food Assessment will be conducted at the end of October which will greatly help in gaining an overall understanding of the situation, as we currently have no national picture.

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FAO AND WFP WORKING TOGETHER  
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131. The team was very pleased to see a joint FAO/WFP project being implemented in several areas of the north and west. WFP included in its Emergency Operation (EMOP) a budget for agriculture tools, fertilizer, and pesticides, and FAO purchased the seeds. In addition, WFP provides a cereal ration to serve as seed protection for the family. Seeds and tools were provided in April/May to 5,381 households in the departments of Korhogo, Sakassou, Yamoussoukro, Tiebissou, and Bouake. And now in September, 9,500 households are being assisted in the departments of Tabou, Duekoue, Guiglo, Toulepleu, Man, Danane, Zouan-Hounien, and Bin Houye. These are areas where there are high concentrations of IDPs, and the project targets host families and IDPs. FAO wanted to provide even more seeds, as the demand for them has grown as people return home, but did not have sufficient quantities to meet the growing demand. WFP and FAO are planning another distribution in the north for February. The team met with beneficiaries of the agricultural inputs in the town of Dahoua, a few

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kilometers northeast of Guiglo. Dahoua had a population of 1,326 and has taken in 586 IDPs. The residents and IDPs were clearing land for rice production and were very grateful about the assistance being provided.

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WFP OPERATIONS  
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132. Late last October, WFP replaced its Cote d'Ivoire country director who was overseeing WFP's development programs with one of its best emergency managers, Gemmo Lodesani. As the war unfolded, first in the north and then in the west, WFP moved as quickly as access allowed to respond to the growing needs. WFP opened seven sub-offices, in addition to the sub-office that already existed in the east in Bondoukou. Each sub-office is responding to the needs in a variety of ways which include general distributions, supplementary feeding, emergency school feeding, wet meals to children, food-for-work, and seed protection. Given the lack of implementing partners (IPs) and problems with securing funding, WFP is to be congratulated for its significant efforts in addressing the burgeoning needs in the country over the last year.

133. The lack of IPs for WFP remains a critical gap and is directly related to the overall lack of international NGOs in the country. There are a few local NGOs, but they lack adequate capacity. The lack of IPs impacts not only the quality of WFP programs, themselves, but also the post-distribution monitoring of the programs. Where there are no IPs, WFP staff are performing the tasks, but WFP does not have sufficient numbers of staff to implement these programs properly. WFP needs a strong NGO partner for its programs in the north and the west. Below is listed where WFP has or does not have IPs for its programs. The list very well highlights the small number of active NGOs.

Abidjan: Caritas and GTZ (distribution to refugees)

Guiglo: Caritas and Solidarites for general distributions and wet feeding. MSF/F, ACF, and Merlin for special feeding programs.

Man: WFP is doing all its own general distributions. MSF/F, MSF/H, ICRC, and ACF for special feeding programs.

Tabou: Caritas for general distributions. ACF for special feeding programs.

Daloa: Solidarites

Yamoussoukro: WFP does not have an NGO partner here; rather its implementing partners are national associations (ASAPSU, Soeurs Providence and Centre Remar). IRC and Caritas are present however. M U.S. MISSION IN ROME

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Bouake: CARE until the end of Sept 03. Also ACF for special feeding programs.

Korhogo: Africare just arrived. MSF/F for special feeding programs.

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WFP FOOD PIPELINE  
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134. For the last several weeks, WFP has been experiencing pipeline problems which will continue into October. Even

though WFP has received significant pledges from USAID/DCHA/Office of Food for Peace (FFP) (6.2 million USD) and the European Union (5.8 million USD), the U.S. commodities will not begin arriving until late September and October. WFP is unsure of the arrival dates of the EU commodities. To cover the breaks, WFP made local purchases, most of which were purchased inside Cote d'Ivoire.

135. Looking to 2004, WFP has begun preparing its next EMOP that would begin in January. A joint mission is being prepared with UNHCR and donors for mid-October that will serve as a platform for discussion for the kinds of activities to be included in the 2004 EMOP. WFP then hopes to issue the EMOP in late November so that donor contributions could be pledged immediately to allow for shipments to begin arriving in March 2004. The current pipeline reflects a need for pulses in April as the most urgent requirement.

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PARTING SHOT - A RAY OF HOPE  
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136. While in Dahoua, the team met with the townspeople and the IDPs. The team thanked the village chief for taking in such a large number of IDPs and being so hospitable (IDPs increased the size of the village by 45 percent). The chief responded by saying that he had been a teacher in the village and many of the townspeople had been his students. He said he had taught them as students to welcome strangers, and Dahoua had become a village where others knew they were welcome.

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RECOMMENDATIONS  
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137. The team makes the following recommendations:

- FAO should work with the local authorities to provide land once again to the Nicla refugee camp inhabitants if they remain in the camp for the next planting season.

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- WFP should implement post-distribution monitoring in the Nicla refugee camp immediately and needs an implementing partner for this.

- The nutritional needs in the Tabou department need to be assessed. Again, the lack of a nutritional NGO in that area is a drawback.

- Food and non-food interventions in Tabou department should be supported in the short term to lower any potential tensions between the local hosting families and the 45,400 refugees as they vie for the same limited resources.

- USAID/DCHA/OFDA should consider providing funding Solidarites if it does not receive funding from ECHO. As stated in para 21 above, if Solidarites stops its operations at the end of September, it will cause a huge gap in providing wet meals to large numbers of children five years and younger in the west.

- USAID/DCHA/OFDA should also consider providing funding to WFP in support of its Risk and Food Security Monitoring System, as such an effort for food security is sorely needed. 175,000 USD would provide six months of funding.

- WFP needs additional implementing partners. Donors, especially the U.S. and the EU since they are providing the bulk of commodities to WFP, should collaborate with WFP in finding suitable partners.

- USAID/DCHA/FFP should participate in the joint UNHCR-WFP-donor mission that will discuss activities and strategies for the 2004 EMOP. The dates are October 14-24, 2003.

138. Ambassador Render cleared this cable.

139. Minimize considered. CLEVERLEY

NNNN

2003ROME04431 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED